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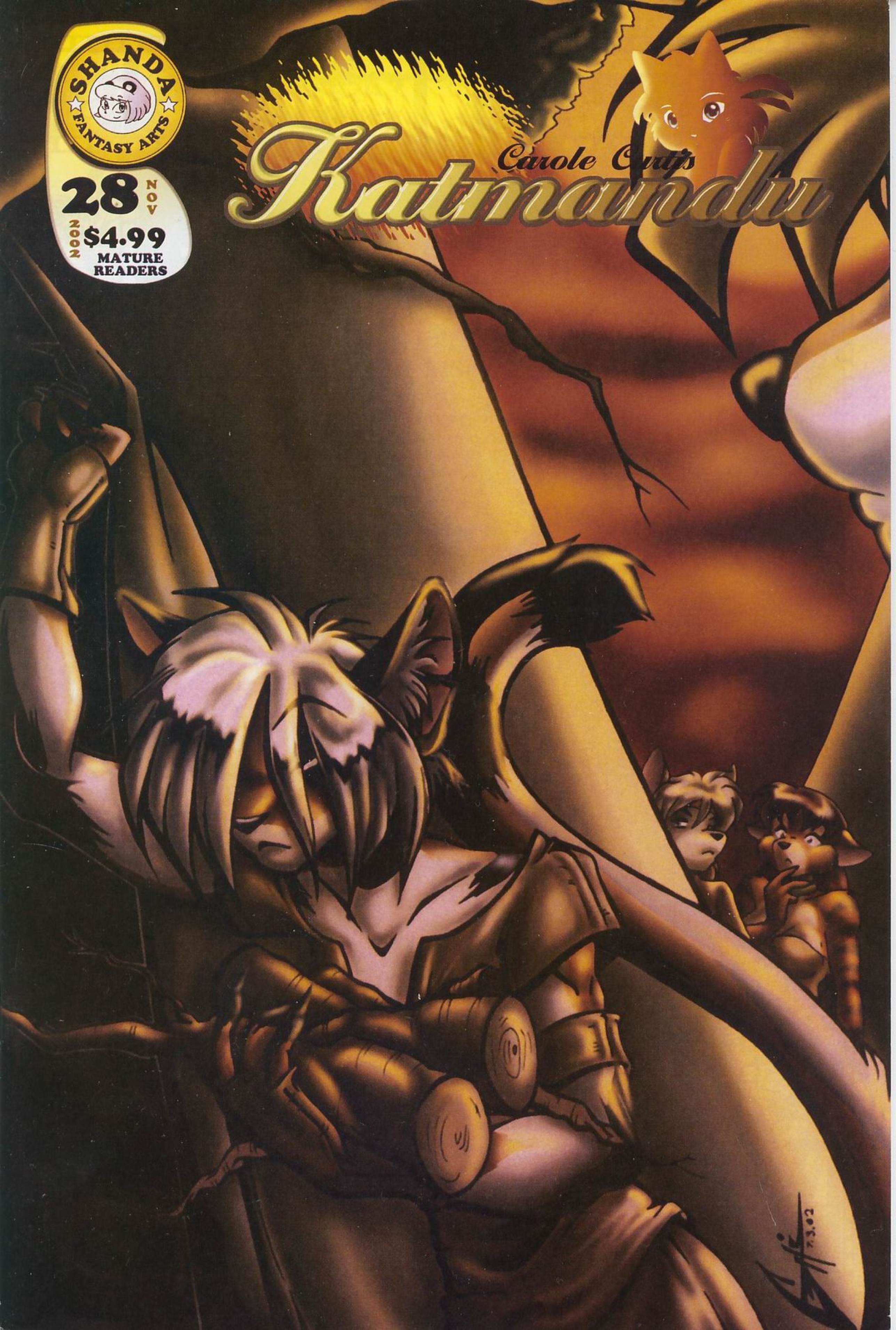

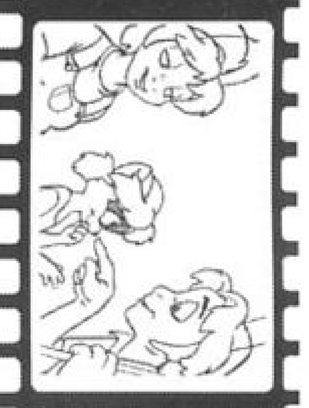

# The INNER CIRCLE

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***In these troubling times...***

we are seeing many discriminated because they have middle eastern origins, or worship in ways that remind others of terrorists. We like to remember this bit of wisdom from the 1940's:

*"Remember this as long as you live: Whenever you meet up with anyone who is trying to cause trouble between people - anyone who tries to tell you that a man can't be a good citizen because he is a Catholic or a Jew, a Protestant or what you will - you can be sure he's a rotten citizen himself and an inhuman being. Don't ever forget that!"*

-Superman from the UNITY HOUSE series on the Superman radio show, late 1940's

*Mike and Carole*

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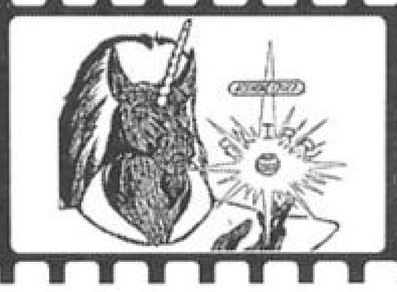
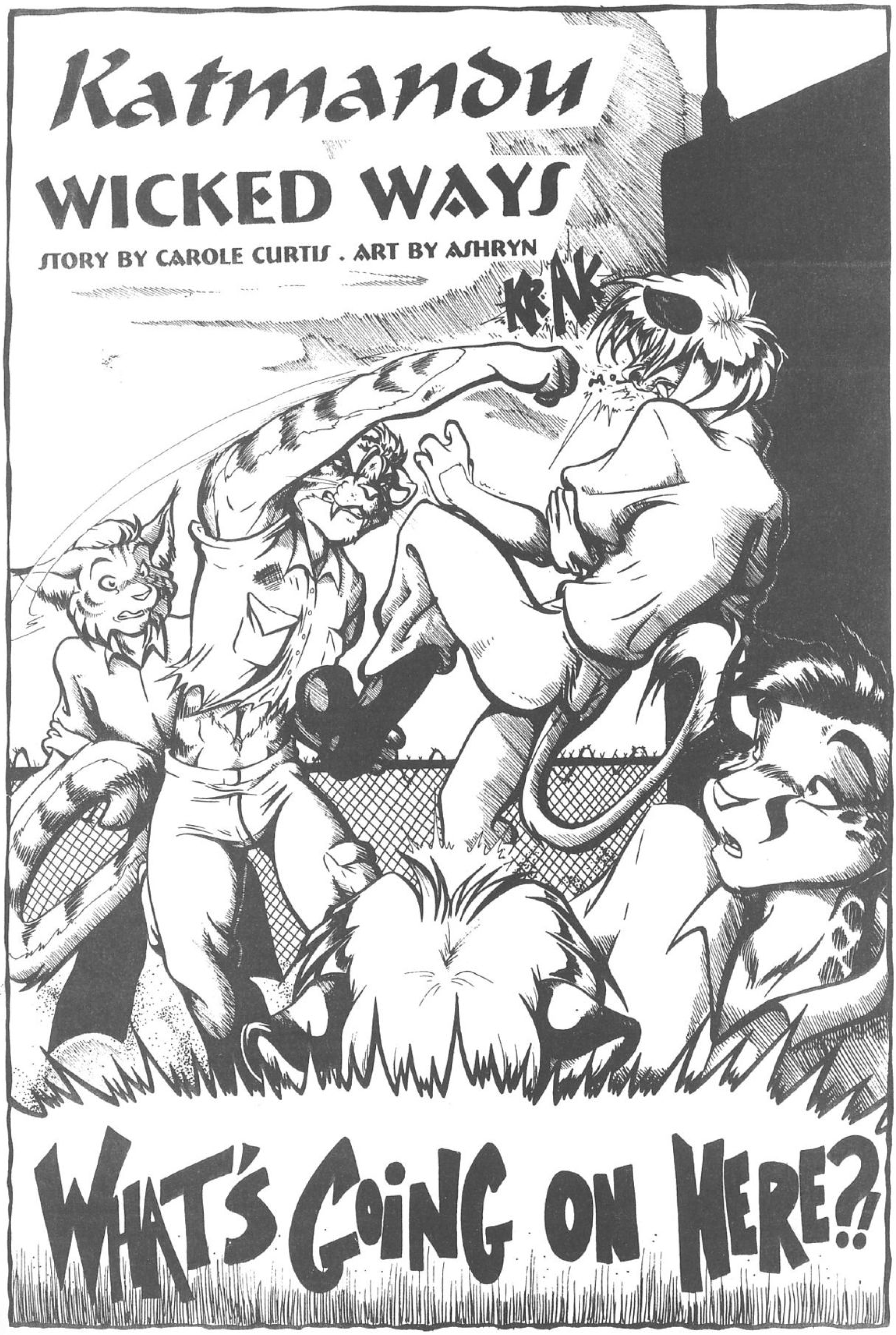


# Katmandu

# WICKED WAYS

STORY BY CAROLE CURTIS . ART BY ASHRYN



BREAK IT UP, YOU TWO! WHAT STARTED THIS?

CLIFF HERE WAS SHOWING A PICTURE OF HIS GIRL.

SO?

WELL, SHE'S PRETTY, BUT WHY DID YOU-

IT'S LIKE I'VE GOT THIRTY KITTENS TO TAKE CARE OF! THANK HEAVENS LEAHTRAH WILL HAVE A GOOD LUNCH.

AT LEAST YOU ONLY HAVE THREE TO WATCH OUT FOR!

FOR A WHILE, IT WON'T BE MUCH LONGER AND I'LL HAVE MORE.

YOU'VE ALWAYS GOT STORIES ABOUT HOW YOUR ANCESTRESS DEALT WITH DIFFERENT PROBLEMS.

ARE YOU TIRED OF HEARING ABOUT LISKA?

NO....BUT I WONDER IF SHE EVER FACED A PROBLEM LIKE THIS, WITH THIS GIRL AND HER MEN ON A STRING.

WELL, THERE WAS ONE TIME. IT WAS AFTER LISKA'S DAUGHTER DAUGHTER CAME OF MARRIAGABLE AGE, BUT IT'S MORE INVOLVED THAN THAT.

GO AHEAD, I'M TAKING A LONG LUNCH.....

I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS, DALOS! YOU STAY AWAY FROM THEA! SHE'S MY WOMAN!

YOU'RE GETTING TOO BIG FOR YOUR LOINCLOTH, MORDATH! THAT SHAPELY FEMALE IS MINE!

DALOS AND MORDATH- YOU TWO YOUNG MEN APPARENTLY LIKE TO FIGHT. YOU HAVE WARRIOR SPIRITS.

AH! THEA'S FATHER!

LOOK OUT!

...WAR CHIEF.....

YOU WILL BOTH STAND GUARD ON OUR EASTERN BORDER FOR A WEEK. PACK AND REPORT NOW.

GO. I'VE GOT THINGS TO DISCUSS WITH CHIEF POWNETKEE AND DON'T NEED DISTRACTIONS. SPEEDWALKER, YOU WAIT.

YES, CLAN LEADER.

WHAT WERE THOSE TWO FIGHTING OVER?

I HATE TO TELL YOU.

BE BRAVE AND SPEAK.

THEY WERE FIGHTING OVER YOUR DAUGHTER THEA.

THANK YOU. I'LL ATTEND TO HER.

ARE YOU COOKING FOR THAT OKAIDO AGAIN? YOU'LL SPOIL HIM.

AND THAT'S HOW I'LL GET A HUSBAND, NOT BY FLOUNCING MY TEATS AROUND.

MAYBE SO, BUT I'M SURE ALL THE WARRIORS ENJOY MY FLOUNCING AROUND.

THEA, I LIKE COOKING FOR HIM. HE LOVES MY DINNERS.

YOU SEE LINNA, YOU TAKE THE SINEW AND A SHARP BONE. AFTER THE HIDE IS CUT, YOU SEW THE PIECES TOGETHER INTO CLOTHING. THAT'S AFTER WE'VE HAD A FEAST ON THE REST OF THE HERNDON. NOTHING GOES TO WASTE.

WHO'S THIS FOR, MOTHER?

IT'S A NEW TUNIC FOR YOUR FATHER.

LINNA, I NEED TO SPEAK TO YOUR MOTHER.

ALL RIGHT FATHER. I'LL TAKE MY SEWING OUTSIDE.

WHAT'S WRONG, LISKA?

THEA IS CREATING DISRUPTION AMONG MY WARRIORS.

I KNOW HOW, TOO.

SHE'S WAVING HER BLACK TAIL AROUND YOUR OVERHEATED YOUNG WARRIORS. HER SPLIT SKIRT SHOWS HER LONG LEAN LEGS. SHE **NEVER** COVERS HER SMALL BELLY, SO MEN CAN SEE WHAT THEY'D LIKE TO MAKE **BIGGER**! AND YOU KNOW THEY LOOK AT HER **BREASTS**!

WHAT DO YOU EXPECT ME TO DO? I FEED AND CLOTHE TEN, NOT COUNTING YOU AND I. THIS WITH LITTLE OR NO HELP. I'M NOT GETTING ANY YOUNGER, YOU KNOW.

THEA IS AS HOT BLOODED AS HER FATHER WAS. MORE SO, SINCE SHE CAN'T QUENCH HER FIRES AS A WARRIOR DOES, OR SHE'LL FIND A KITTEN IN HER BASKET.

I HADN'T CONSIDERED THAT.

AND THE WARRIOR WOULD BE GELDED BY MY KNIVE.

NO WARRIOR DOES. YOU'RE MORE WARRIOR THAN WOMAN.

I NEED HELP WITH OUR FAMILY. YOU'RE OFF PLANNING OR HUNTING. OTHER WARRIORS WITH THIS MANY KITTENS HAVE MORE THAN ONE WIFE TO DO THE WORK I DO.

I'VE HAD BAD LUCK WITH SECOND WIVES.

THEN LET ME FIND ONE.

AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF HAVING A YOUNG WOMAN AROUND?

THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT PLEASES YOU.

NOW COME COOL YOUR TEMPER WITH YOUR OLD WIFE.

GET UP!!

WHAT IS IT FATHER?

I'M HUNGRY. GO GET SOME FOOD FROM THE TRIBE OVER THE RIDGE.

ALL RIGHT. TURN YOUR HEAD SO I CAN DRESS.

WHY BOTHER?

WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT BIRD I COOKED YESTERDAY?

I ATE IT WHILE YOU WENT FOR WATER LAST NIGHT.

HURRY UP, PATCHES!

HE'LL GIVE ME AWAY IF HE'S NOT QUIET.

I SMELL A STEW- THAT GIRL'S CARRYING IT.

A LITTLE SKINNY, BUT WE COULD THROW YOU IN THE POT FOR SEASONING!

CAN I TRADE WORK FOR IT? IF SHE'S SCARED, IT COULD FALL AND BREAK.

WHAT HAVE I CAUGHT HERE?

LET ME GO!!!

PUT ME DOWN!

SORRY, I'M ON BORDER GUARD. I HAVE TO TAKE YOU TO MY CLAN LEADER AND THIS IS THE EASIEST WAY.

WHAT NOW?

I'VE GOT AN INTRUDER, LISKA!

COME INSIDE.

I DON'T KNOW YOU, GIRL. WHY WERE YOU CREEPING AROUND OUR CAMP?

I WAS LOOKING FOR MY SISTERS.

YOUR SISTERS?

YES, SHEEL AND KETHLYN. THEY'VE BEEN VISITING YOUR WARRIORS.

THOSE TWO. THEY NEVER SPOKE OF A SISTER.

THEY DON'T TALK ABOUT ME. THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO BRING BACK FOOD FOR FATHER AND ME.

WHERE IS YOUR FATHER? OUTSIDE OUR CAMP?

YES, WE'VE BEEN STAYING BEYOND THE WEST RIDGE.

STAY PUT!

?!

HESTA, TAKE TWO WARRIORS AND BRING HER FATHER IN. THE HIGHLAND PEOPLE SHOW HOSPITALITY TO WANDERERS. BUT LEAVE THE YOUNG ONE HERE.

HMMM...THE STREAM IS PEACEFUL TODAY.

YOU'RE NOT THAT PEACEFUL, GILES. YOU'RE **FRISKY!**

THE COOL WATER FEELS GOOD ON MY FEET. BUT I LIKE BEING WARM. SOMETIMES EVEN HOT, GILES.

SORRY ABOUT NOT FIXING LUNCH. I GOT TOO BUSY WITH MY SISTER.

THAT'S ALL RIGHT. KETHLYN MADE ME A MEAL.

WHO IS KETHLYN?

SHE'S THIS NEW GIRL WHO'S BEEN HANGING AROUND THE VILLE. SHE'S GOT A SISTER TOO, BUT I DON'T KNOW HER.

GILES, I HAVE TO GO TAKE CARE OF MY LITTLE BROTHER.

HER NAME IS LISKA MITSEL-EMAH AND SHE'S OUR CLAN LEADER AND MY HUSBAND!

!*

WHO WAS THAT WOMAN?

SHE'S YOUR HUSBAND?

YES, WE HAVE TEN CHILDREN AND MY LISKA IS THIRD IN COMMAND OF THE TRIBE. NOW, WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

PAJALIS, BUT MY FAMILY CALLS ME PATCHES.

I'M SHAYGIN. YOU LOOK HUNGRY. SHOULD WE FIX LUNCH?

SNF SNF

I'M NOT MUCH OF A COOK.

AS FAST AS MY FAMILY EATS I COULD FRY DIRTCAKES AND THEY'D NEVER KNOW.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU NEED US. MY SISTER AND I WERE JUST VISITING SOME WARRIORS.

I DON'T KNOW. I'M JUST DOING WHAT MY CLAN LEADER SAYS.

SOUNDS FUNNY TO ME. WE'RE JUST TWO GIRLS LOOKING FOR HUSBANDS.

BY THE WAY, DID YOUR WIFE MAKE YOU THAT VEST?

NO, I'M NOT MARRIED.

OH?

I'VE TALKED TO WARRIORS AROUND THE CLAN. YOU'VE BEEN SENDING THESE TWO DAUGHTERS INTO OUR CAMP TO ENTICE THE YOUNG MEN AND SCROUNGE FOOD FOR OVER A WEEK. OUR TRIBE DOESN'T MIND SHARING, BUT YOU'RE ONLY TAKING, NOT GIVING. WE'LL GIVE YOU A TENT AND SHARE FOOD WITH YOU FOR THREE DAYS. AFTER THAT, YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY.

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH MY YOUNGEST GIRL PATCHES?

SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE WASHING OUR CLOTHING!

...

THERE'S A STREAM NEARBY WHERE YOU CAN WASH YOUR CLOTHING. MY WIFE IS KIND HEARTED AND IS KEEPING PATCHES AT OUR TENT TO FATTEN HER UP.

YOU CAN'T KEEP MY DAUGHTER PRISONER!!!!!

I WOULDN'T FOLLOW MY WAR CHIEF IF I WAS YOU. THIS IS MY NEW KNIFE AND I HAVEN'T HAD A CHANCE TO CHRISTEN IT YET.

HELLO, WIFE. LUNCH READY?

ALMOST, HUSBAND. THE SOUP IS HOT. AND PATCHES HELPED.

SO PATCHES, HOW DO YOU LIKE MY TENT?

IT'S FINE...

ARE YOU REALLY A CHIEF? HOW DID YOU BECOME ONE, BEING A FEMALE?

YES I AM, AND I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT IT AFTER LUNCH.

WHAT'S HER FAMILY LIKE?

YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW.

DO YOU MIND IF I GIVE HER SOME OF MELA'S CLOTHES SHE'S OUTGROWN? THAT'S ALL SHE HAS TO WEAR.

SHE'D LOOK BETTER.

MOTHER, I WANT TO TALK TO YOU!

I FEEL THE SAME, THEA.

MOTHER, THERE'S TWO FEMALES IN CAMP, FLIRTING WITH OUR WARRIORS AND CAUSING PROBLEMS. ONE OF THEM FLIRTED WITH GILES. THE OTHER MAIDENS ARE COMPLAINING. UNCLE MARKREE SAID YOU TOOK THEIR SISTER INTO OUR TENT. I WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO ABOUT IT!

DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU'RE TALKING TO?

HUH?

I AM CLAN LEADER. THE LIVES OF TWO SCORE ARE IN MY HANDS. AND MY WARRIORS ARE FIGHTING OVER A FEMALE THAT ACTS LIKE SHE IS IN SEASON. WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH THIS FEMALE?

VERY WELL, PACK AND LEAVE, SINCE YOU PICKED THAT PUNISHMENT.

BANISH HER FROM THE CAMP!

MOTHER! I MEANT THOSE OUTLANDER FEMALES!!!

THEN DON'T BE SO QUICK TO PASS JUDGEMENT.

HI....SHAYGIN SAID I SHOULD SERVE YOU YOUR MEAL. YOUR FAMILY IS EATING, BUT WE SAVED YOU THE BEST.

PATCHES, DID YOU EAT YET?

NO MA'AM. I WANTED TO MAKE SURE YOU ATE FIRST.

THEN SIT, AND WE'LL SHARE OUR MEAL.

HEY, YOU! WHEN IS MY OTHER DAUGHTER BEING RETURNED TO US?

THAT'S MY CLAN LEADER'S DECISION. PROBABLY BEFORE YOU HAVE TO LEAVE.

THE GROUND AROUND OUR TENT IS GETTING MESSY. CLEAN IT UP, KETHLYN.

THAT'S PATCHES' JOB! SHE CAN DO IT WHEN SHE COMES BACK!

THEY'RE KEEPING US ON THE OUTSKIRTS, WITH GUARDS POSTED.

THAT'S TO MAKE SURE WE DON'T GO BACK INTO THEIR VILLAGE. I TRIED AND WAS TURNED BACK.

THEIR WARRIORS WON'T FEED US PAST TWO DAYS.

NEVER MIND, WE'LL EAT THOSE TWO DAYS, AND THEN FIND AN EASIER PLACE.

WHAT ABOUT PATCHES?

WE'LL FIND OUT WHAT TENT SHE'S BEING KEPT IN AND STEAL HER BACK!

CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE